UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/457/Add.1
1 October 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-seventh session
Agenda items 78 and 109

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

# Assessment of the environmental focus of projects financed by the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies

## Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Assessment of the environmental focus of projects financed by UNDP and other United Nations agencies" (see A/47/457).

92-47324 3683e (E) 141092 *161092*

/...

Comments of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Assessment of the environmental focus of projects financed by the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies" (JIU/REP/91/2)

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the report is to ascertain to what extent projects financed by UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system take into account environmental factors.

2. At the system-wide level, the Inspectors recommend that the integration of the environment into the development process should become a permanent agenda item of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system. They also consider that there is an increasing need for a more coordinated multidisciplinary approach to the preparation and implementation of programmes by United Nations entities concerned with the management of the environment.

3. Within the United Nations, the Inspectors recommend that UNEP headquarters programmes enjoying a comparative advantage, such as preparation of environmental research studies and statistics, drafting of international conventions on environment, holding of conferences and seminars on the environment, and the coordination of environmental activities of the system, be strengthened, and that its regular budget and technical cooperation funds be increased. They also recommend that the potential of the regional commissions to promote regional and interregional cooperation for the benefit of environmental management be fully utilized and adequate provision made for such projects.

4. Finally, the Inspectors express the view that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should play an essential role to give environment the importance it deserves in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and should introduce a new form of international cooperation for preserving global resources in accordance with the needs of the international community.

## II. GENERAL COMMENTS

5. The organizations members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination welcomed the topic of the report and acknowledged the efforts made by the Inspectors to cover in detail a very broad range of activities. In many instances, however, the report's findings had been overtaken by events. This was not surprising in a field as dynamic as that of the environment. Furthermore, the report did not cover several organizations carrying out significant environmental activities or activities relating to environmentally sound and sustainable development, in particular the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food

Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Relevant joint programmes of the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the area had not been reflected in the report either.

6. Several organizations noted that the report understated the work accomplished for decades by the United Nations system on the environment, before the importance of the environment had acquired world-wide recognition. Rather than attempting to analyse specifically the environmental impact of the work already done, the report contained very general recommendations for increased and improved environmental activities, which could have limited practical impact, particularly as they were not supported by any cost-benefit analysis.

7. In the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the most serious shortcoming of the report was its rather narrow focus on environmental problems, environmental conservation and environmental projects, instead of reflecting ongoing United Nations system's efforts to integrate environment and development with a view to developing operational modalities for sustainable development, which was the guiding principle of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. For instance, it might have been useful to take note of the scope of the preparatory work of the Conference, including the considerable work done by the regional commissions. Also of relevance were the objectives and content of the UNDP Environmental Management Guidelines and of the UNDP Sustainable Development Network, which UNDP was trying to launch throughout the world to support information exchange on sustainable development at the national, as well as the intercountry, interregional and global levels. Other important factors or initiatives that should be mentioned in the same context were the setting up of the Interim Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol and the current status of the Global Environment Facility.

8. Furthermore, the report suffered from the lack of definition of what constitutes an "environmental" programme or project; it was not clear from the report where a "sustainable development" project ended and where an "environmental project" began.

## III. COMMENTS ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS

9. On the whole, the Administrative Committee on Coordination considered that many of the recommendations were either too general or had largely been overtaken by events. Several important suggestions of a more specific nature that had been made in the body of the report could have featured among the recommendations at the end of the report.

Recommendation 1

"The integration of environment into the development process should become a permanent agenda item of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system. These bodies should include in their respective programmes and budgets and medium-term plans, appropriate measures responding to the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development as well as the successive related resolutions of the General Assembly."

10. The Administrative Committee on Coordination pointed out that this recommendation had already been implemented.

Recommendation 2

"There is an increasing need for a more multidisciplinary coordinated approach to the preparation and implementation of programmes by various United Nations entities involved in the management of environment. The appropriate United Nations organs dealing with coordination should be encouraged to strengthen their collaboration and to increase the tempo of their meetings to that effect."

11. Again, the Committee pointed out that this recommendation had already been implemented, in particular in the context of the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Recommendation 3

"The United Nations system should endeavour to bridge the gap between diverging positions adopted by the developed and developing countries concerning environment and development. Both groups are equally subject to severe environment degradation. A closer and more efficient cooperation between rich and poor countries is needed and should take into consideration that the poor countries, because of their limited financial and technological resources, are not in a position to contribute fully to environment conservation;

"In order to put this recommendation into effect, the following measures are suggested:

"(a) To strengthen the capacity of each United Nations entity involved in the management of environment so as to make the system more responsive to the needs of the developing countries to develop their own capacities;

"(b) To invite developed Member States to increase their financial and technical assistance to third world nations with a view to adopting in collaboration with the United Nations system strategies that promote environmentally sound and economically viable projects;

"(c) UNEP's headquarters programmes, such as preparation of environmental research studies and statistics, drafting of international conventions on environment, holding of conferences and seminars on environment, coordinating of environmental activities of the system should be strengthened. For this purpose UNEP's regular budget and technical cooperation funds should be increased;

"(d) The potentials of the regional commissions to promote regional and interregional cooperation for the benefit of environmental management should be more fully utilized and adequate provisions for such projects should be found;

"(e) The United Nations officials involved in the management of environment should receive special training to educate them on their duties, authorities and responsibilities in this regard."

12. The Administrative Committee on Coordination endorsed the first part of the recommendation, as well as its subparagraph (a). It noted that subparagraph (b) was addressed to Member States. Concerning subparagraph (c), the Committee noted that the recommendation was not substantiated in the body of the report, and pointed out that UNEP's main mandate, which was to coordinate with and to catalyse other organizations in the United Nations system, should be adhered to. Subparagraph (d) was endorsed and subparagraph (e) duly noted.

Recommendation 4

"The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should play an essential role to give environment the importance it deserves in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade. The Conference should also furnish a better basis for cooperation between rich and poor countries and produce a new form of international cooperation for preserving global resources that are appropriate to the real needs of the international community."

13. The Administrative Committee on Coordination shared the view of the Inspectors concerning the essential role of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Several organizations stressed the importance of individual countries in preparing national position papers, and noted that their representatives in the field had been instructed to cooperate fully with Governments for that purpose.

---